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SUBJECT: HUMALA DOWN BUT STILL AHEAD IN PUNO

REF: A. LIMA 307

[1](#)B. DRAFT 2005 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT
[1](#)C. 05 LIMA 3267

Summary:

[1](#)1. A recent trip to Puno provided insights into ultra-nationalist, radical, anti-system candidate Ollanta Humala's support in this rural and traditionally more radical region of Peru (Ref C). Humala's popularity in Puno has been dented but not fatally damaged by political problems within his party and recent revelations that he may be guilty of human rights violations. Despite these, in areas outside the city of Puno, Humala remains the candidate of choice for impoverished small agriculturalists who long for an authoritarian "tough guy" leader in the mold of former President Fujimori, someone who can get things done and produce favors for farmers. End Summary.

[1](#)2. Poloff interviewed a variety of local contacts during a 2/10-2/12 trip to Puno with visiting Washington analysts. The trip focused on Ollanta Humala's level of support in this rural, historically radical region. Those interviewed included: representatives of the regional government (Hugo Munoz Guerra and Victor Ciro Quispe Nina); the Dean of the local Journalists Association (Leoncio Aleman); the Rector of the National University of the Highlands (Martha Tapia); two representatives of the local NGO "Network Peru" (Jorge Romero and Javier Molina); a representative of the Catholic Church affiliated, pro-farmer NGO the Center for Peasant Training (CCCP) (Ricardo Vega); and the director of a USDOL financed program to promote early childhood education and fight child labor (Ernesto Garcia). All know the Puno region well and offered insights into the politics of this rural region likely to be a bastion of support for Humala.

Ollanta Down But Not Necessarily Out

[1](#)3. Recent problems within the Union for Peru (UPP) and Peruvian Nationalist Party (PNP) alliance as well as revelations about possible human rights violations have hurt Humala's support. Most observers interviewed thought that Humala had peaked too early and would not win the presidency. Chaos in Humala's party structure has undercut his credibility as both a figure who could bring order and as a non-traditional "Mr. Clean" outsider. Leoncio Aleman pointed out that in Puno both the UPP and the PNP were submitting separate congressional lists. More than one observer cited

the presence of a well-known local political opportunist, Juan Jose Vega, on Humala's initial congressional ticket (Vega has since been pulled from the list) as the kind of association that had compromised Humala's image with local voters. For Puno voters, the image of chaos in Humala's political party has done him far more damage than accusations of human rights violations. All contacts agreed that Puno voters are not interested in democracy, but instead long for a Fujimori-like strong man who can bring order and get things done.

Durable Elements in Humala's Support

¶4. While Humala has problems within his organization, has made some bad associations, and his campaign presents a picture of chaos, most of those interviewed emphasized that his support has durable elements, particularly with rural small farmers. Jorge Romero, stressed the long-term groundwork laid by Ollanta Humala's brother, Antauro, over the last five years. Romero described how many male children from rural families go into the army for at least one tour, pass through the military and then return to their home villages and cannot find a job. The Ethnocaceristas, he said, wisely targeted this demographic in forming the ranks of their uniformed "reservists," who have spent the last five years selling the newspaper "Ollanta" throughout the countryside. (Note: After the alleged break between Ollanta and his brothers Antauro and Ulises Humala, the newspaper was renamed "Antauro." End Note.) The "reservist" label provided a job of sorts (selling the newspaper on commission) and, above all, a self-esteem boosting identity as a foot soldier in a pro-coca, pro-cobrizo (person of indigenous background), ultra-nationalist movement for young campesino men who had recently finished military service. Local contacts said that two or three reservists from Puno participated in Antauro Humala's 2005 New Year's Eve Revolt in Andahuaylas and several others in the Humala Brothers' earlier rebellion in 2000.

¶5. Humala has inherited a strong legacy of local support for former President Alberto Fujimori. In the countryside, "El Chino" (Peruvians ethnic-nickname for Fujimori) remains very popular, remembered for regular visits that left gifts of tractors to local communities and for having overseen the construction of paved roads between both Puno and Cusco and Puno and Arequipa, according to Hugo Munoz and Ciro Quispe. While questions about Humala's character have surfaced in news reports on television and in radio, the anti-system voters have no place else to go and tend to reflexively distrust the judgments of the Lima media. Martha Chavez has only captured a part of the local anti-system vote so far, because Fujimori is the person Puno farmers most closely associate with tough-guy leadership as well as government benevolence.

¶6. Questioned about the possibility that the candidacy of Ulises Humala (Ollanta's older brother) for President might cut into Ollanta's vote, local contacts said that anti-system voters do not care about the split between the Humala Brothers. They are convinced that this is a tactical maneuver for the election and see a vote for Ollanta as a vote for change. Journalist Leoncio Aleman noted a possible weakness in Ollanta Humala's local advertising, which does not stress his party's symbol. He said some rural voters might become confused between the two and split their votes by accident.

The Evo Effect

¶7. Puno is tied closely to Bolivia. Smuggling from Bolivia is one of the main economic activities and many local Aymara speakers consider themselves to be part of a common Bolivian-Peruvian ethnic "nation." As such, our local

contacts emphasized that Evo Morales' win in Bolivia created a wave of pro-indigenous feeling that benefits Humala. Rural Puno voters, University of the Highlands Dean Martha Tapia stressed, are quite racist in their thinking. (Tapia is a trained veterinarian who works in rural areas.) They resent anyone who is a "misti" (i.e. a white person from the cities). They see Ollanta Humala as a "misti" as well, but as one who understands their problems.

Some Radical Recrudescence

¶18. Sendero Luminoso is making a comeback in some rural areas, according to Tapia. She spoke with frustration about how a small number of radical students (maximum 500 of a total student population of 15,000) can cripple her university at will with the aid of politically extremist sympathizers on the faculty. Tapia related how during travels into the countryside she has heard that Sendero Luminoso is regrouping in rural areas. When asked to provide details, she conceded that she could not, stating that "there are certain things one doesn't ask about" while working in remote regions. Tapia maintained that Sendero's new strategy is non-violent, and involves penetrating organizations to ensure that nothing works, so that people are driven to search for radical alternatives.

Humala Predominates, But Puno Not Locked Down

¶19. Humala remains the candidate of choice for many rural voters in this historically radical region. Nonetheless, cracks in his support could open some inroads for other candidates. A visit by Humala to Puno two weeks ago did not produce an overwhelming turnout. About two hundred of his followers crowded the local plaza, the rest of the crowd made up of the curious. Alan Garcia attracted a similar sized crowd during an earlier visit, and many local women in the city of Puno are attracted to Lourdes Flores' candidacy.

¶10. Leoncio Aleman thought that Garcia could recover support in Puno. Ricardo Vega agreed, stating that Garcia is remembered for having distributed land to campesinos in the 1980s. (Though this policy ultimately proved economically disastrous, creating many nonviable, tiny land holdings, in popular memory Garcia still gets points for handing out land titles.) All interviewed emphasized that rural voters are looking for the candidate who will do something for them, who will provide credits, build roads, or promote programs that favor the region's small farmers, many of whom live off intermittent commercial activity (like smuggling) and work tiny inherited plots of land to provide sustenance for their families.

Congressional Candidates

¶11. Leoncio Aleman and others predicted politically fragmented results in congressional elections for Puno. A likely winner is incumbent Congress member Jhonny Lezcano, who is seen by locals as having done a good job. (Note: the Puno Congressional Delegation was not noted for its statesmanship. One member, Congress Representative Torres Ccalla, was recently sentenced to eight years in prison for moving an underage staffer to Lima so that he could exploit her sexually -- Refs A, B. End Note.) Lezcano represented the Popular Accion Party (AP) and is now running in the number one spot on presidential candidate Valentin Paniagua's list. Aleman was convinced that the other parties would split up the rest of the seats, with Lourdes Flores, Alan Garcia, Valentin Paniagua, and Humala's candidates dividing the remainder of the seats.

Comment: Humala's Hidden Support?

¶12. Puno's poverty and tradition of anti-system radicalism make the area a key potential base for Ollanta Humala. Stories about chaos in Humala's campaign and, to a far lesser degree, revelations about human rights violations have dented but certainly not fatally damaged his local support. It remains to be seen if Humala's recent actions to purge his congressional list (he recently replaced 13 candidates of questionable character) will enable him to regain lost ground by proving his credentials as the kind of saloon-clearing, authoritarian "tough guy" that rural protest voters in Puno and other areas are seeking. Since many Humala voters live in remote areas, opinion polls could underestimate possible additional support for Peru's ultra-nationalist, anti-system candidate. End Comment.
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